Request for Economic Stimulus Funds

Concept Proposal

Submitted by the College Readiness Workgroup
Co-Chairs: Barbara Burch and Gail Wells

Project Title:
A Kentucky College-Readiness Web Portal: Support and Development for Readiness Initiatives

Project Partners (Known or Anticipated):
Known: UK, KCTCS

Anticipated: CPE, the KDE, Kentucky Workforce Development Cabinet, Kentucky State University, Eastern Kentucky University, Northern Kentucky University, Morehead State University, Murray State University, University of Louisville, Western Kentucky University, and interested institutions as partners or clients on a voluntary basis.

Project Background & Purpose (Justification for Project):
This project will develop a statewide resource where students, parents, teachers and school administrators can access information about college readiness standards, placement testing and course placement policies for Kentucky colleges and universities. This site is to be based on a similar one developed in support of the California State University's Early Assessment Program (EAP www.csumathsuccess.org). Allison G. Jones has noted the success of the EAP effort with the sustained 19% increase in the number of freshmen entering with college-level math proficiency since 2001. The goal of Senate Bill 1 to reduce Kentucky's level by 50% is reflected in California's success.

The most cost-effective way to build this complex site and create benefits for other agencies and institutions is to supplement an existing web-development group to oversee the project, and coordinate with all interested agencies with the goal of creating reusable, extensible frameworks, and providing consulting services for other web-based Readiness efforts.

The first task will be the development of this important and complex math-readiness website and management tools. Knowing that other agencies can reuse the programming efforts in this work, the framework will be designed to extend and support other disciplines such as writing, foreign languages, workforce readiness, and general college readiness, which will be determined by collaboration with the state-supported institutions.

Since development efforts are often made without a plan for reuse, the cost for developing similar projects is increased. By collaborating with the KCTCS, KDE, Workforce Development and interested institutions this model creates a cost-efficient method for the most expensive aspect of typical web-development projects. For example, KCTCS one the partners in this effort cites the need for motivational and social interaction with students in their upcoming Readiness efforts. Establishing partner needs early by consulting with the various groups and agencies

yields efficient development in this modular approach.

Funding this grant takes advantage of and supplements existing resources, and allows for the leveraging of new funds to create resources and services to be used by multiple institutions and agencies.

Project Description (General Goals & Implementation Strategies):
This is a multi-faceted project. Several proposed Readiness projects have very similar sounding web-technology components. In fact, most projects will have some amount of web-technology as a component. Since an inappropriate choice of technology can make or break a project, we are proposing that a distinct project be established with the following goals:

1) Develop a solid and extensible framework for the web-based system described in proposal "Improving College Readiness through Targeted Transitional Courses and College Placement Testing for High School Seniors", such that it could be extended to other disciplines and agencies.

2) Provide 'Consulting' to any agency or group desiring to build or leverage web technology in the readiness or any related area. Consulting would include (but not be limited to) evaluating the project and suggesting potential technologies, assisting in preparing budgets and other requirements, assisting in the location of a development partner.

3) Provide periodic workshops available to members of other state agencies, where current best-practices, trends, case studies would be presented and discussed. While the focus would be on technologies applicable to Readiness and related topics, as many web-technologies are generic in nature, any agency developing or deploying web-based technology may benefit from attendance.

Project Team (Project Manager(s), Content Experts, Instructional Designers, etc.):
Mark Denomme PM (UK), John Soward PM (UK), Ken Kubota (UK), Rick Chlopan (KCTCS), Sandy Cook (KCTCS), Steve Newman (NKU), Ann Riggs (KDE), Sue Cain (EKU/CPE), Ted Hodgson (NKU), will be the leadership team involved in the initial planning of the project.

The University of Kentucky's IT Site Lab has developed a variety of web applications and web communications systems. Existing resources in this department will be utilized, and at least two additional staff will be added for the duration of the grant. Existing employees participating in the project could be eligible for temporary increases. This may prevent the loss of some of the state's 'best and brightest' while UK endures several consecutive years without raises or promotion opportunities.

Project Budget & Amount of Economic Stimulus Funds Requested:
The direct cost for the first two years of the program amounts to $650K/yr, and this amount is being requested from the Stimulus Funds. Resources and systems developed during this time that need to be operated or updated after the stimulus funds are expended will require some additional resources, however maintenance costs are typically a small fraction of development costs.

Estimated breakdown per annum:

2.5 Full-Time staff -- $250K
(two experienced developers facile with modern tools and technologies, half-time worth of resources from either student interns or 'overloads')

Contractors/services/video/audits -- $200K
In order to maximize the amount of development and deployment, which can be achieved in a short time frame, any items that can be more efficiently done at partner institutions or by third parties will be identified. Kentucky businesses will receive preference. This provides several benefits, it reduces the impact of the 'funding cliff' when compared to increasing local staff, allows the project to receive top-quality work in lightly needed areas, and allows stimulus funds to migrate directly to other companies in the state.

Training, Workshops, Documentation -- $150K
Existing and new employees will need some amount of training and professional development to assure that all modern best practices are being used. Since in addition to software development and installation, this group will be expected to present information to other development groups, and consult with other areas doing similar development, a deep understanding of many topics will be required, as well as broad general knowledge of all current and upcoming technologies.

Workshops will be developed and produced from this project will need to be offered at low or no cost to others in order to maximize attendance and utility.

Documentation-related expenses will include, editing, printing/production, training tests, etc. The quality of usage-documentation and training has a direct effect on the adoption of most web-based tool sets. Additionally, some of the resulting systems from this project will likely be continued after the term of this grant, but not necessarily by the same group which did the initial development or deployment.

Equipment, Software, COE -- $50K
Includes development and testing tools (workstations, servers, software, licenses, right-to-use, etc.), as well as general operational expenses, network connections, supplies, etc.
Any large-scale computing servers intended for long-term deployment for a specific project will need to be purchased with funds from said specific project.

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